

## AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) An absorbent composite comprising a first stratum, a second stratum, and a transition zone intermediate and coextensive with the first stratum and the second stratum;

the first stratum comprising synthetic fibers and a binder material;

the second stratum comprising crosslinked cellulosic fibers and a binder material; and

the transition zone comprising fibers from the first stratum and the second stratum commingled substantially uniformly across the composite's width and along the composite's length.

2-5. (Canceled)

6. (Original) The composite of Claim 1 wherein the first stratum is substantially homogeneous.

7. (Original) The composite of Claim 1 wherein the second stratum is substantially homogeneous.

8. (Previously presented) The composite of Claim 1 wherein the first stratum has a pore size greater than the pore size of the second stratum.

9. (Original) The composite of Claim 1 wherein the first stratum has a density in the range from about 0.01 to about 0.3 g/cm<sup>3</sup>.

10. (Original) The composite of Claim 1 wherein the second stratum has a density in the range from about 0.03 to about 0.5 g/cm<sup>3</sup>.

11. (Original) The composite of Claim 1 wherein the first stratum has a basis weight in the range from about 10 to about 100 gsm.

12. (Original) The composite of Claim 1 wherein the second stratum has a basis weight in the range from about 10 to about 500 gsm.

13. (Previously presented) The composite of Claim 1 wherein the synthetic fibers comprise polyethylene terephthalate fibers.

14 and 15. (Canceled)

16. (Currently Amended) The composite of Claim 1 wherein ~~at least one~~ the binder material of the first stratum comprises a fibrous binding material.

17. (Previously presented) The composite of Claim 16 wherein the fibrous binding material comprises bicomponent binding fibers.

18. (Currently amended) The composite of Claim 1 wherein ~~at least one~~ the binder material of the first stratum comprises a wet strength agent.

19. (Original) The composite of Claim 1 wherein the first stratum comprises fibers having a length from about 0.25 to about 1.5 inches.

20. (Original) The composite of Claim 1 wherein the first stratum comprise fibers having denier from about 5 to about 20.

21-74. (Canceled)

75. (Currently amended) A foam-formed absorbent composite comprising a first stratum, a second stratum, and a transition zone intermediate and coextensive with the first stratum and the second stratum;

the first stratum comprising synthetic fibers and a binder material;

the second stratum comprising crosslinked cellulosic fibers and a binder material; and

the transition zone comprising fibers from the first stratum and the second stratum commingled substantially uniformly across the composite's width and along the composite's length.

76. (Original) The composite of Claim 75 wherein the synthetic fibers comprise polyethylene terephthalate fibers.

77. (Currently amended) The composite of Claim 75 wherein ~~at least one~~ the binder material of the first stratum is one of bicomponent binding fibers and a wet strength agent.

78. (New) The composite of Claim 1 wherein the binder material of the second stratum comprises a fibrous binding material.

79. (New) The composite of Claim 78 wherein the fibrous binding material comprises bicomponent binding fibers.

80. (New) The composite of Claim 1 wherein the binder material of the second stratum comprises a wet strength agent.

81. (New) The composite of Claim 75 wherein the binder material of the second stratum is one of bicomponent binding fibers and a wet strength agent.